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THE WOMAN'S WELFARE DEPARTMENT OF THE NATIONAL CIVIC FEDERATION¹

MRS. JOHN HAYS HAMMOND

Chairman

THE Woman's Welfare Department of The National Civic Federation is an organization of women interested in the welfare of government and industrial employees. We are a body composed of three classes of women: women who as stockholders or through family relationship are financially interested in industrial organizations; women who are interested because their families are employed in government departments; and women drawn to welfare work by their desire to be helpful.

Our aim is to improve the working and living conditions of the wage-earner. This includes the safeguarding from unnecessary risks in dangerous and unhealthful occupations; the provision of proper ventilation, light, and sanitation; the furnishing of lunch rooms, rest rooms, educational and recreational facilities; the establishment of good housing conditions, savings funds and benefit and loan associations—recognizing always that the first essentials to the welfare of the employe are steady work, an equitable wage, and reasonable hours of labor.

Our method of work is to meet the employer, and by interesting him in the needs of his employes to work with him for improved conditions. We study the condition of many institutions, and where we find points to be commended we are quick to bring them to the attention of other employers.

Our woman's welfare department is yet in its infancy, being barely four years old, but we have lived long enough to see some of the fruits of our endeavors. We initiated a Woman's Welfare Department for Government Employes in Washington, and Congress, animated by our efforts, has ap-

¹ Read in discussion at the meeting of the Academy of Political Science, November 11, 1911.

pointed a committee to inspect all department buildings and to report as to their needs in the way of proper sanitation. Following this investigation we hope that Congress will pass the bill which our organization has urged, providing for a government board of sanitary inspectors.

There is need of welfare work in every community where there are factories, stores, mines, railroads or public institutions, such as city hospitals, post offices, schools and other government buildings.

The scope of our opportunity for good is limitless. With the great influx of women into industrial pursuits, many problems arise hitherto unknown in civic life. We feel that with patient study and unselfish zeal we may help to solve some of these problems. Surely the thoughtful management which has gone toward the making of our own homes may effectively be applied to bring about a considerate justice in ordering these larger homes of industry. Our special care is woman. The value of woman to the state is, after all, as a mother, and this function should not be impaired by unnecessary hardship as a wage-earner.

In the United States there are seven million women who are employed in industrial pursuits. Unregulated hours of labor and the lack of consideration for the workers' health and comfort are happily disappearing, for in the changed economic conditions in the business world employers see that it pays to have good lunch rooms, recreation halls and means of assistance for those who are ill or in financial distress. They recognize that greater efficiency results from good working conditions.

Our work so far has been relatively local ; but we have formed active sections in New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Georgia and Washington, D. C. Other sections are in the process of organization, and it is our aim and expectation to extend the welfare department throughout every state and territory of the union. In every region of our great country where women are employed there is much for us to do—sympathy and intelligent aid to be given by those who have the time, means and influence to devote to this great work—the improvement of the condition of the wage-earner.